The Washington Merry-Go-Round

FBI Spied on Dr. King's Successor

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By Jack Anderson and Les Whitten

At the request of the late Dr. Martin Luther King's associates, we investigated the smear charges that the FBI had spread against him. We reported in an earlier column that the stories were grossly inaccurate.

The same associates complained that King's successor, the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, also was kept under intensive FBI surveillance. From secret FBI files, we have confirmed that the agents have a record of the most intimate details of his life.

They know everything about him from his finances to his health, including the medications he takes every morning and evening. His FBI file contains a psychological profile, copies of his hotel bills, transcripts of his speeches and even an account of his traffic violations.

One FBI memo, stamped "Confidential," reveals the details of a squabble Abernathy had on Feb. 5, 1970, with his subordinates. Afterward, the memo notes, Abernathy discussed the flare-up with his wife. Their conversation is outlined in detail.

We showed the file to Abernathy, who readily recalled the conversation with his wife. It had occurred, he said, in the privacy of his bedroom. "They had to be bugging me," Abernathy told our associate, Joe Spear.

At the FBI, a spokesman categorically denied that agents had ever used electronic surveillance against Abernathy. Several references, including other conversations between Abernathy and his wife, are attributed in the file to "confidential sources who have furnished reliable information in the past."

It is clear from the file that FBI agents visited the U.S. Passport Office to get his travel schedule and credit bureau offices to find out about his finances.

Under the late J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI was almost paranoiac about black leaders. We have had access to other secret dossiers, indexed under "Racial Matters," on such prominent black leaders as the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Roy Wilkins, Bayard Rustin, Floyd McKissick, Roy Innis and Martin Luther King's widow, Coretta.

Dossiers were kept on black artists, entertainers and sports figures, ranging from heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali and actor Harry Belafonte to comedian Dick Gregory and singer Eartha Kitt.

This FBI concentration upon prominent blacks has alarmed black members of Congress who asked us to testify on Capitol Hill. We brought the evidence, complete with names and details.

My testimony concluded: "To the FBI, apparently, anyone with a dark skin who dares to open his mouth is viewed as subversive. I have seen dozens of dossiers on black leaders whose only crime is voicing the tribulations of their people; who have done nothing more than organize their ranks; who are guilty only of peacefully petitioning their government in redress of grievances, as their Constitution says they have an inalienable right to do."

Footnote: In fairness, it should be added that the present FBI director, Clarence Kelley, has abandoned his predecessor's bias against blacks and has adopted a balanced racial policy.

Defense of Jackie — For most Americans, the famous photograph of Jacqueline Kennedy crawling across the back of her assassinated husband's limousine in Dallas is one of the most poignant memories of the '60s.

This left the impression that she panicked at the shots and tried to save herself by leaving her dying husband.

But now, the nation's most indefatigable private investigator of the assassination, Harold Weisberg, of Frederick, Md., has discovered that certain material was deleted from Jackie's testimony on June 5, 1964.

The deleted testimony indicates that she was trying to aid her husband, not save herself. The details were so grisly that they were deleted as a matter of taste. We have decided not to reprint this portion, except to report that the First Lady apparently was trying to help keep her husband's head intact, not trying to escape from the limousine.

The full details will be published in a 650-page book called "Post Mortem." Weisberg concludes, as he has in past books, that the assassination was the result of conspiracy. Our own investigation shows that many questions remain to be answered. But we have not seen enough evidence to contradict the Warren commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin, acted alone.

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